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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: SLA/MM STUDENTS TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE CENSUS

REFS: A. KHARTOUM 383

[1](#)B. KHARTOUM 381  
[1](#)C. KHARTOUM 372

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (SBU) SLA/Minni Minnawi (SLA/MM) student supporters reject the census and are organizing campaigns against it at universities in Darfur as well as in SLA/MM political offices. Regarding university politics, the students described NCP harassment including freezing of student body elections at El Fasher University - which leaves the institution without a student body government. End summary.

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SLA/MM STUDENTS TO LAUNCH CAMPAIGNS AGAINST THE CENSUS  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) On 12 March, four SLA/MM university students and graduates along with an SLA/MM party rep told poloff that the time is not right for a census in Darfur. They claimed that they would use their control over the student body at the University of El Fasher to spread the word about boycotting the census and would launch campaigns against it. The students said they intend to use their university colleagues to "carry the message" to the Darfuri populace about not participating and pledged to have weekly forums at the university and at their SLA/MM office in order to get their message out.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The students echoed sentiments that are widespread across Darfur - the census cannot go forward given the instability of Darfur and the number of people who are displaced. One student explained that the population of Darfur has historically been 6 million, but it is currently less because of the number of refugees and displaced. They explained the importance of the census to determining wealth and power-sharing at a national level and proposed postponing the census until security in Darfur improves and people return to their villages. They outlined the problems with conducting the census in Darfur: a) armed movements in many areas will not allow census enumerators to move around freely and b) the number of refugees in Chad, Central African Republic, Ghana and other locations will lead to an inaccurate count of the true population of Darfur. An inaccurate census will lead to "greater conflict and more fighting", they said.

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ON ELECTIONS  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) The SLA/MM students said that their movement does not accept the draft electoral law because it does respect nor promote equality among parties. They said that having a census and elections now is "meaningless" for the people in Darfur and predicted that after elections, Sudan will suffer a violent fall-out

like the one that besieged Kenya. They claimed that the SLA/MM is organized and ready to participate in elections, but will not do so because the GoS is forcing both an undemocratic census and elections on the people of Sudan. One student said that if the GoS were to commit itself to implementing the DPA, SLA/MM would be more willing to participate in elections. The students claimed that 95 percent of Darfuris support SLA/MM and said that the movement is not "intimidated by the elections." If the SLA/MM were to participate, the students claimed the movement would win Darfur. However their official stance is to call for a delay of the elections. (Comment: The students' assertion that the vast majority of Darfurians support Minawi's faction - which is clearly not the case - calls into question the credibility of their other statements. End Comment.)

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EL FASHER UNIVERSITY POLITICS  
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15. (SBU) When discussing politics at the University of El Fasher, one student pulled out stacks of forms registering students as SLA/MM supporters. Although the student body is 6000, the student claimed that only 1500 students are politically active and out of that 1500, 1000 are SLA/MM supporters. The other 500 politically-active students mostly support the SPLM, Umma or the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP). They said that the NCP has a small number of supporters at the University of El Fasher. The students said that the SLA/MM has a substantial following at the University of Nyala and University of Zalingei as well. They claimed that Sudanese National Intelligence Security Service (NISS) personnel routinely arrest and torture SLA/MM students at universities across Darfur and Kordofan. They explained that just two months ago, the SLA/MM student group at the University of Nyala held a forum where they discussed the DPA. SLA/MM students were subsequently arrested and detained by NISS. Some were not allowed to re-enroll in the University. The students claimed that other political party student groups have forums at the universities but do not suffer the same

KHARTOUM 00000399 002 OF 002

treatment.

16. (SBU) The University of El Fasher student said that the GoS constantly monitors the student political groups at that university and seeks to derail coalitions between opposition parties. There are 30 students elected to the student government at the University of El Fasher, but the school has not had elections since the year 2000 and therefore has no student government in place. The students explained that the NCP intentionally freezes elections at universities if they believe that opposition parties will win. The NCP has also been known to rig elections at some universities in order to win the majority of the student government seats. The students said that opposition party coalitions are normal at universities, but that the NCP student group does not coalesce with other groups - as the NCP wants to have a strict majority.

17. (SBU) At the University of El Fasher, SLA/MM has established a coalition with the SPLM, New Sudan Forces, and independents. The students claimed that the NCP attracts student voters by giving away mobile phones and other hot commodities. The students explained that it is a stigma for students to be aligned with the NCP, so they will only align with the NCP when there is a financial incentive to do so. In some cases, the NCP will offer to pay tuition fees or other expenses for students if they register as NCP. [NOTE: One student said that at a university in Blue Nile State, elections have been frozen for 13 years. Additionally, two students were not allowed to graduate for two years because of their involvement with opposition party functions. END NOTE.]

18. (SBU) The University of El Fasher student said that the GoS uses tactics of terrorism to intimidate students at his university. Just one year ago, the Sudanese police stormed into the girls' dorm and harassed female university students. He said that the SAF is present at the University of El Fasher and has heavy weaponry inside the university campus. This is a tactic that the GoS uses to intimidate students into not supporting student opposition parties and rallies. "The NCP knows that a majority of Sudanese citizens oppose them, therefore they must apply tactics of intimidation and fear in order to stay in power," said one student.

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Comment  
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¶9. (SBU) The NCP's strategies for keeping a tight hold on university politics seem to be the same throughout the country - harassment, alleged torture, arrest, and bribery (ref B). University politics in Darfur are even more contentious than in other regions of the country due to the current conflict and political situation in the region. Although the NCP cannot strong-arm and quash all rebel movements in the area, it maintains an overwhelmingly militaristic and intimidating presence in the universities, where it manages to stamp out alternative views through shutting down political forums, freezing elections, and keeping students from re-enrolling or graduating.

¶9. (SBU) The SLA/MM students echoed the political statements made by their leader Minni Minawi on the census - that it should not go forward given the situation of displacement and insecurity in Darfur. The students are using their student supporters to speak out against participation in the census and to hold university forums rejecting census participation. Although the general population of Darfur rejects having a census at this time, this move signals that it is not only the older population (especially the native administration) that rejects the census, but the younger population whose feelings follow closely behind.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE  
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¶10. (SBU) Of the students we spoke with, one is the Secretary General of SLA/MM at El Fasher University, the second is a graduate of the University of Bakht Al Ruda (150 km South Khartoum), the third and fourth students are graduates of the University of Imam Al Mahadi in Jezera Abba (near to Kosti). The party rep is Ahmed Hassan Bahar who represents SLA/MM in the North Darfur Legislative Council. End note.]

FERNANDEZ